

New Castle City Planning Commission Meeting
Minutes
March 24, 2014 -- 6:30 p.m.
City of New Castle's Town Hall

Members Present: David Bird, Chair
David Baldini
Joe DiAngelo
Jonathan Justice
Josephine Moore
Michael Quaranta
Florence Smith

Member Absent: Daniel Bungy
Vera Worthy

Also Present: Jeff Bergstrom, Building Official

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes – A motion was made and seconded to approve the 2/24/14 minutes as distributed. Motion approved.

Minor Sub-Division- 1000 Washington Street (Tax Parcel 21-014.00-139) – Mark Ziegler of McBride and Ziegler presented. McBride and Ziegler prepared the plan. The location is a vacant lot at the intersection of Washington and 10th Streets. Two (2) houses are being proposed. Ms. Pfeil informed this is a minor sub-division and the property is in the R1 zoning district. It meets all zoning requirements. The parcel is subject to two front yards as a corner lot. No site plan or construction submitted at this time. A review of parking or driveway requirements will be done during the building permit process. Lot 1 is undeveloped and does not have a driveway, but Lot 2 has an existing driveway location off Washington Street. Off-street parking will be required for both lots. The homeowner is aware of all contingencies that need to be met. Ms. Pfeil has no objections to the minor sub-division.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minor sub-division of 1000 Washington Street. The motion was approved.

Report on Parking Study – Dr. Jo Viola presented. The committee continues to work on optimizing existing parking spaces in the City. The National Park Service (NPS) submitted a letter with recommendations to the City that includes a summary of their transportation study and steps for consideration. *(Dr. Viola will provide copies of the letter to commissioners.)* Recommendations include adopting the Downtown Gateway (South Street) for primary visitor parking, pending improvements of the walkway in Battery Park for the restrooms and playground, overflow parking using other lots like the Broad Dyke lot, and that signage should direct visitors to the South Street areas. Dr. Viola said the committee needs to conduct parking counts. They are looking into residential parking permits, but no action taken to date.

Two specific proposals are being presented tonight for consideration. Concept plans will be presented at a future Planning Commission meeting. They are assessing existing parking availability on Delaware Street within the historic area and evaluating the current spaces for expansion and improvement of additional space for mixed use (visitor, resident, business) parking. The committee believes the City should consider a comprehensive design plan for parking improvements.

- *Market Streets (on Second Street side) – (maps distributed)* There is an issue of safety where Second Street meets Harmony Street with vehicles obstructing part of the street, and causing visibility issues for motorists. Concerns discussed included existing signage that causes confusion, curbing, fading yellow paint on curbing, and the problems two churches (Emmanuel and Presbyterian) experience. The committee has reached out to Supt. Smith of the NPS, Cindy Snyder at the New Castle Court House, New Castle City police department, and representatives from Emmanuel and Presbyterian churches to discuss their concerns. The committee recommends removal of confusing signage and replace with more appropriate signs.

Market Street (on Dewey Park side) – The committee recommends restricting parking in areas where there is no curbing, look into adding granite curbing, install more appropriate signage, and establish “drop off” sites for church events (funerals) and large City events.

Better signage will enable the police to enforce that signage. Estimates on granite curbing will be explored and provided to commissioners before the next meeting.

- *Permit Proposal – (Distributed to commissioners.)* The goal is to improve existing parking in a way that would complement the new National Monument with the least impact on City residents (from Third Street to the pier). Committee members Tom Whitehead and Jim Vincent presented. They identified current parking availability and what existing open space could be used for expansion as follows:
 - Rear lot to M&T Bank (M&T). Details for the lot included who (bank employees, customers, residents) can use the lot and timeframe, permission to use lot needs to be secured, and landscaping. The lot is owned by the City. High impact opportunity.
 - East of tennis courts –The intent is to accommodate residents and visitors to Battery Park. Limited access parking. The area is owned by the City.
 - Sailing Club – The number of spaces is unknown until construction work is finished.
 - Low impact sites include the old recycle site, Fort Casimir and Bull Hill.

Their proposal for expansion of existing parking includes changing the end of Delaware Street to limited parking, signage (time limits), expand lot behind M&T Bank to be a limited access lot.

Ms. Moore expressed her concern with the M&T parking area proposal adding to existing problems with people accessing the basketball courts in Battery Park and with flooding problems experienced by residents in that area. She added that residents have

been told that landscaping would be done in the past, but that has not materialized. Mr. Baldini questioned pedestrian safety in nearby alleyways and security such as lighting and call boxes. Drainage and traffic issues were also cited as concerns.

The Trustees of the New Castle Common (Trustees) is presently doing a comprehensive study regarding plans for Battery Park. Trustee Chris Castagno was in attendance and said the ideas presented are good ones and that the Trustees would consider the committee's proposals in their planning stage.

Update on Waterfront Study/Pier Update – Mr. David Gosse, Duffield Associates presented. Plans were submitted to the State and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in January. The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control will publish their concept plan this week for 20 days. He will provide the document to the City Administrator for the City website and the Planning Commission. The economic study should be finished in the next two weeks. A preliminary draft is expected next week and will be provided to the City Administrator. The architectural report will be provided to commissioners. The total cost of the project is \$785,450 that includes a 15% contingency figure. The project includes demolition/removal of the old pier, mobilization and demobilization of equipment, foundations, structural steel and timber, timber decking, aluminum floating dock and gangway, railings, lighting, utilities, plasma modification, wave attenuators (not attached to ice breakers), miscellaneous expenses, and contingency. He is unsure if soft costs like supervision are included in contingency monies. Maintenance costs and projected life span will be incorporated in the final report. The State of Delaware and Corps are in agreement with this concept plan. The permitting process is the next step. Mr. Gosse said that nothing historic is being disturbed; namely the ice breakers. Old pilings will be removed. Day slips are not included in the plan, but can be put in a different plan.

The floor was opened for public comment.

Mr. Rob Gillespie, 24 West 4th Street, asked if there will be a cost estimate analysis pertaining to the public docks. He is concerned with financial burden on taxpayers. Mr. Gosse said that projections should be part of the economic study. Mr. Bird added that the Planning Commission has urged that funding come from sources other than the City and that matching funds be used when possible. Ms. Pfeil said that other funding sources will be sought once the permitting process is finished.

Mr. Gillespie questioned the 6' width of the parapet as being narrow. Mr. Gosse said the width is measured from the outer edge of the railing to the opposite railing's outer edge. Mr. Bird noted it must be ADA compliant.

Ms. Dorsey Fiske, 26 East 3rd Street, informed the old walkway known by some as the "prisoner's bridge" was built in 1944-1945 by German prisoners from Fort du Pont. Mr. DiAngelo added the catwalk was rebuilt in 1999 and the City's portion was \$35,000. The Corps deeded it to the Trustees in 1946 and is to be maintained by the owner.

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2014

Mr. Binnie Beale, 26 The Strand, said there is a group of citizens not in agreement with rebuilding the new pier. They feel the prisoner's dock should be reconstructed using FEMA funds they think the City may already have received. Rather than take the dock back to where it was, they suggest extending the existing walkway and go over both ice breakers and construct the pier at the end, which would be less expensive. The first ice breaker is falling apart but the ice breaker that is farthest out in the water is in good shape.

Mr. Bird reminded that the Planning Commission has already made its recommendation to City Council and concerns about rebuilding the pier should be directed to them.

Update on Comprehensive Plan – Ms. Pfeil suggested a master comprehensive parking plan that involves land use be included in the Plan. The updated Plan will need to include data from the 2010 census. Mr. Baldini is concerned that depending on the date that is to be used (initial plan date or last update) to when the plan is updated, information could be obsolete.

Budget Status – No report.

Commissioner's Comments

Mr. DiAngelo – A former pier study was found to be unfeasible. He would like M&T to consider new curbing on the bank's side of Delaware Street from Third Street towards Second Street. He suggested the curbing work may be able to be included with work proposed on Market Street to keep costs down.

Ms. Moore—She wonders if M&T would consider removing the dilapidated garage in the back alley to allow for more parking. Ms. Pfeil advised that removing the garage that sits on an asphalt surface and putting parking spaces in its place would not trigger a storm water permit. But adding new parking spaces on a grass surface would be considered an increase to the pervious area and would generate the need for a storm water permit, which is expensive. *(Discussion followed.)*

Mr. Quaranta – Revisited the pier issue saying that he and others have attended events in the area and adding a pier will only add appeal for future events. He believes it could be an asset. There is an absence of yellow paint on curbing in many areas. Mr. Justice said the Parking Subcommittee has discussed this issue and the police department has provided a list of areas that will be presented to City administration.

Mr. Bird – Renewals/subscriptions of American Planning Association memberships have been approved.

The next Planning Commission meeting is 4/28/14. There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Debbie Turner
Stenographer